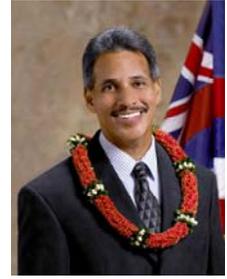




LINDA LINGLE



JAMES "DUKE" AIONA JR.

Aloha!

Each Earth Day, people around the world renew efforts to protect our planet for future generations.

In Hawai‘i, where our oceans and ‘āina (land) possess great cultural significance, caring for our fragile environment is of extraordinary importance. Our oceans, beaches, coastlines, mountains and valleys not only contribute to our quality of life, but are at the very heart and soul of who we are as a people and a state.

Our Administration is proud to work with partners at all levels of government, the public and private sectors and communities to champion initiatives to preserve what is special about our island home.

Last year, we launched the Hawai‘i Innovation Initiative, a comprehensive and multifaceted effort aimed at shifting our economy’s over-reliance on land development toward cultivating our human capital and our residents’ capacity to innovate. This year, we are continuing this effort with renewed vigor – investing in programs to strengthen our workforce so that Hawai‘i can compete in the 21st century global economy without overdeveloping its most precious natural resources.

Approaching challenges in new and innovative ways has been a vital advantage in the area of land and ocean conservation. Recent successes have also demonstrated the incredible value of partnerships.

One example is the multi-partner effort establishing the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument – the largest conservation area in the U.S.

In 2005, the state implemented a new model for preservation called the Legacy Land Conservation Program, which uses public funds to purchase properties with important environmental and agricultural value and protect them for perpetuity. To date, the program has provided grants for the acquisition of land on the islands of Hawai‘i, Maui, Moloka‘i and O‘ahu.

In 2006 and 2007, public-private partnerships allowed for the protection of several parcels of environmentally and culturally significant land, including Kawainui Marsh, Waimea Valley and Pūpūkea-Paumalū on O‘ahu, and Wao Kele O Puna, a 26,000-acre rainforest on the island of Hawai‘i that Native Hawaiians have used for centuries for traditional hunting, gathering and religious practices.

Currently, the state is coming together with residents, legislators, conservationists, nonprofit groups, union representatives and the private sector to develop a plan to acquire and preserve the 850-acre Turtle Bay property on the North Shore of O‘ahu, including five miles of pristine coastline. Acquiring the property would allow for the protection of the area’s natural resources and way of life, as well as the long-term economic viability of the existing resort.

Nowhere is the breathtaking diversity of our islands highlighted more dramatically than at our 69 state parks on the islands of Hawai‘i, Kaua‘i, Maui, Moloka‘i and O‘ahu. In 2005, our Administration launched a multi-year initiative to improve Hawai‘i’s state parks as part of the first major reconstruction project since the park system was established more than 40 years ago.

Additionally, we have increased the enforcement of environmental laws and promoted greater controls of invasive species since coming into office.

Perhaps our greatest environmental challenge – and opportunity – rests in our state’s pursuit of energy independence.

Today, Hawai‘i is the most oil-dependent state in the nation, with 90 percent of our energy supply derived from imported fossil fuels. Hawai‘i’s energy paradigm must fundamentally change, and it must be a rapid transformation.

This past January, our Administration announced the Hawai‘i Clean Energy Initiative, an innovative partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy that aims to have at least 70 percent of Hawai‘i’s power come from clean energy by 2030. Hawai‘i is the only state in the nation to have signed this type of partnership.

Through the Hawai‘i Clean Energy Initiative, our state will become a test-bed of technology, a focus of Department of Energy knowledge and resources, and a place for private companies to launch new ventures. Solar, wind, wave, geothermal and bio-energy projects will power our daily lives.

Hawai‘i has already taken important steps toward energy efficiency, and across all sectors. The state’s Airports Division is moving forward on an historic plan to develop large solar power arrays at 10 government sites across the state, including airports. Each day, headlines tell of more Hawai‘i businesses that are investing in energy-saving technologies to reduce their environmental impact. Commercial producers of clean energy are using renewable sources like wind and volcanic heat to reduce our oil consumption by hundreds of thousands of barrels each year.

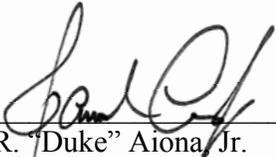
The progress we have made thus far in our conservation efforts and increasing our energy efficiency shows that the individual efforts of residents and businesses are not only meaningful, but critical to the protection of Hawai‘i’s fragile environment. All of us have a role to play, whether it is changing to compact florescent light bulbs at home, installing solar panels on a store rooftop, or showing aloha for our precious land and sea.

This Earth Day, let us each reflect on what we can do to secure a cleaner, brighter future. Working together, we will fulfill the important obligation we have to each other and to the future citizens of Hawai‘i and the world to protect this unique and beautiful place.

Mahalo nui loa!



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